

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Active shooter exercise helps first responders prepare for real-life situations

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

All Union County first responder agencies and Union General Hospital carried out a full-scale active shooter training exercise on Friday, May 3.

A similar exercise took place in Towns County at the same time.

Both exercises were sponsored by the Georgia Mountains Healthcare Coalition and were directed jointly by the coalition and the Northeast Georgia Health System.

The Union County exercise was staged in the park-like area between the Union County Farmers Market and the recently restored Hunter-England House in Blairsville.

Several hospital volunteers volunteered to play the parts of both the wounded family members who were

enjoying a day at the park and the Ghostface Gangsters who started the bedlam.

The exercise began with a 911 call being initiated and law enforcement responding to neutralize the shooters. The family members were strewn all around the area with simulated gunshot wounds they acquired while trying to run away from the shooters.

The scene was made to look and feel like the real thing, complete with staged blood.

As fire department first responders and EMS arrived on scene, triage was immediately initiated to identify the most seriously injured for treatment first.

At the same time, the hospital and Air Life helicopter crew were notified of a mass casualty event and began to prepare accordingly.

Each wounded person

was tagged with a card stating their vital signs, which helped first responders to identify the more seriously wounded and what stabilization procedures to begin with.

As EMTs and first responders separated the victims according to triage and began to get the victims onto gurneys, the Air Life helicopter circled the area looking for an appropriate landing zone.

The chopper finally came straight down in a small area between some trees and the Hunter-England House, where the Air Life medical crew disembarked and rolled out a gurney.

Within minutes, all of the victims were loaded onto gurneys and each was taken to one of three ambulances – some riding double – and transported to the hospital.

See Active Shooter, Page 6A



Dan Wickersham and Richard Jones help a "wounded victim" during the May 3 active shooter training exercise at the Union County Farmers Market. Photo by Mark Smith

## Ladder 1 officially in service; Phase II of training facility almost complete

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Fire Department works very hard responding to fires, motor vehicle crashes, medical emergencies and rescue calls 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

But the fire department does something else that many residents are not aware of – under the direction of Fire Chief David Dyer, the department is looking out to upgrade its personnel through training and recruitment, and its equipment through prudent acquisitions.

In September 2018, the department acquired its first ever ladder truck, and on Wednesday, May 1, that apparatus was officially put into service.

It took several months to get the late model vehicle ready for service and to train local firefighters to operate it competently and work off the ladder safely.

The new truck will help Union County to maintain its low Insurance Services Office rating, thereby keeping local homeowners insurance low.

Dyer said that, just a few years ago, the county's ISO rating was 6.9, but that in 2015, the fire department started

graduating volunteer firefighters with better training, and the acquisition of newer apparatus, among other things, helped to drop the ISO rating to 4.4Y.

The lower the rating, the better, and the ladder truck will help to keep that rating low.

Lt. David Ueltzen, who was instrumental in locating and negotiating the deal for the ladder truck, said he scrutinized 43 apparatus over a two-year period before deciding on this particular vehicle.

After the department took delivery of the apparatus, it had to be checked out and certified again and have Union County

See Ladder 1, Page 2A



Union County firefighters conducting a traditional "push-in" of Ladder 1 at Fire Station No. 1 on Wednesday, May 1. Photo by Mark Smith

## Panthers, Lady Panthers host Class AA Elite 8 playoff games this week

By Todd Forrest  
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Both Union County soccer teams are three wins away from the ultimate goal as they look to take the next step toward a state title when they host the Class AA State Quarterfinals this week.

The Region 8-AA Champion Lady Panthers, ranked sixth in the state, recorded their second shutout of the postseason on May 1, blanking Gordon Central in Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

Next up, the girls hosted top-ranked St. Vincent's Academy in a game that occurred after press time on Tuesday, May 7, at 5 p.m.

The matchup was the toughest test of the season

See Soccer, Page 2A



Kobi Robbins and Brian Smith celebrate following Union's comeback victory at 10th-ranked Gordon Central in the Sweet 16. Photo by Todd Forrest

## National Day of Prayer participants urge people to 'Love One Another'

By Mark Smith  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Well over a hundred Blairsville Christians from churches all over Union County gathered for the National Day of Prayer event on Thursday, May 2, at First Baptist Blairsville.

As they have for the past seven years, longtime Union County residents Richard and Sharon Morrison coordinated the local prayer event, which has been a staple of Blairsville/Union County culture going back several generations.

Members of Joshua's Warriors, a local men's Christian organization, ushered the event, greeting people and handing them programs as they arrived at the church sanctuary.

"Thousands of people gathered together today all



Richard and Sharon Morrison at the 2019 National Day of Prayer event in Blairsville. Photo by Mark Smith

across our great nation to pray and celebrate the 67th Annual National Day of Prayer," said Sharon, adding that the theme of this year's event was to "Love One Another," referencing John 13:34.

See Prayer, Page 3A

## Old Courthouse honors history of Appalachian Trail with new display



L-R: Dayton Miller, Joe Boone, Martha Miller, Geri O'Brien, Judy Carpenter and Bud Akins with the new permanent Appalachian Trail display at the Old Courthouse Museum. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard  
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The Old Union County Courthouse now features a permanent display celebrating the history of the Appalachian Trail in North Georgia.

Located in the center of

the main floor inside the Old Courthouse Museum, the four-paneled, spinning wooden kiosk highlights the rich history of the 2,190-mile Appalachian Trail and its significance in the North Georgia Mountains.

The display chronicles tons of trail history, from its humble

origins as a proposed "refuge from a civilization which was becoming too mechanized" in 1921 and the construction of the Blood Mountain Shelter by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, on through to modern times with the designation of

See Courthouse, Page 2A

## Farmers Market ramps things up ahead of June 1 season opener

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Farmers Market hosted its annual Ramp Day and Beef It Up events on Saturday, May 4.

The occasion was the first Farmers Market event leading up to the 2019 season, which will officially begin on June 1.

Ramp Day offers vendors the opportunity to come display their goods before the season, and it gives attendees a community event where they can try samples of dishes made with ramps as well as locally sourced beef.

"We have had the beef and ramps event for at least five or six years," said Market Manager Mickey Cummings. "We are very happy with today's turnout and the community support that came out to try some of the food our vendors



The Farmers Market was exceedingly busy during the ever-popular Ramp Day event on May 4. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

market. "Ramps are basically just wild onions," said Bob Biberstine, one of the volunteers serving a ramp in any form that make them in their form at the

See Market, Page 6A

Vol. 110 No. 19  
4 Sections 32 Pages  
Weather  
Thurs: Cloudy Hi 78 Lo 61  
Fri: T-Storms Hi 75 Lo 61  
Sat: T-Storms Hi 74 Lo 60

Arrests 7A  
Church 4B  
Classifieds 4A  
Opinion 4A  
Legals 6D  
Obits 6B  
Sports 2C

**SPORTS**  
SOCCER (Quarterfinals)  
May 7 vs. St. Vincents Acad.  
5 PM - Girls  
May 8 vs. Jeff Davis  
6 PM - Boys

**Panther Prints**  
Student  
Newspaper  
See page 2B

**Relay For Life**  
Dinner and  
Auction May 11th  
See page 2D

**Notice from**  
Tax Commissioner  
Lee Knight  
See page 7B